



GENDER INCLUSION IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality matters because women can bring money home which empowers them financially and socially. If women have a bigger say in how household money is spent this can ensure more of it is spent on education of children, health of elderly and on things which result in better outcomes for the family growth. This will require addressing multiple barriers to gender equality among families, job and product markets. Overall increase in participation of women in workforce will require addressing multiple and reinforcing barriers to equality among families, job and product markets. It can be said that IT industry has given justice to urban educated women and has been far more gender inclusive than any other sector of the economy. It has certainly given quality employment to women in large numbers. Of late, there have been less complaints of gender discrimination and women seem to have been breaking the glass ceiling also. Women who are still facing problems in this sector are mainly due to patriarchal mindset of people at home and in the society rather than at workplace.

KEYWORDS: *Gender equality, Gender Inclusion, IT industry, Women Empowerment*

1. INTRODUCTION

Equality for women is to the benefit of all. No country can reach its full economic potential and achieve widespread prosperity if half of its population cannot participate fully in the economy. Gender equality also matters because women can bring money home which empowers them financially and socially. If women have a bigger say in how household money is spent this can ensure more of it is spent on education of children, health of elderly and on things which result in better outcomes for the family growth. Increased participation of women in workforce will require addressing multiple barriers to gender equality among families, job and product markets.

2. OBJECTIVES

Considering the scenario mentioned above main objectives of the study are identified as follows:

- i. To view the participation of women in workforce and in IT industry in India.
- ii. To analyze the problems faced by women in Indian IT industry which are detrimental to the industry's inclusive growth from gender perspective.
- iii. To make suggestions for making the Indian workforce and IT industry more and more gender inclusive.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both the primary and the secondary data. Primary data are collected through questionnaires from 200 women working in IT industry of

Mumbai city. Non-probability convenience sampling design was used for identifying the respondents. The questionnaire was prepared in such a way as would help in analyzing the problems faced by women in Indian IT industry which are detrimental to the industry's inclusive growth from gender perspective. These working women from IT industry were also asked to make suggestions for making the Indian IT industry more and more gender inclusive. The information collected through the questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS package. Simple statistical tools like mean, median, mode, average, correlation, regression, chi square etc. are used for analyzing the data and for arriving at the conclusion. Secondary data are collected from various government Reports and websites.

4. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LABOUR FORCE IN INDIA

Women's participation in labour force is an indicator of potential of a country's growth. However, the process of development appears not to be just with women when it comes to providing jobs in India. Women's participation in labour force is an outcome of various economic and social factors which reinforce each other in a very complex manner at both the household and the macro levels. In organized sector women face many barriers to access decent employment and are less represented. In informal economy they are heavily represented where risk of exploitation is greatest in absence of any formal protection or any social security. As per the

World Bank data women occupy less than a third of India's overall workforce which is the lowest among BRICS nations. China has 64 % women participation in workforce, Brazil

has 59%, Russia has 57% and South Africa has 45%. As per the Census – 2011, labour force participation rate in India is given in Table-1.

Table – 1: Labour Force Participation Rate in India

Year	Rural		Urban	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
2000-01	28.7	54.4	14.0	53.1
2001-02	31.1	54.6	13.9	55.3
2002-03	28.1	54.6	14.0	53.4
2004-05	32.7	54.6	16.6	54.9
2005-06	31.0	54.9	14.3	54.0
2007-08	28.9	54.8	13.8	55.4
2009-10	26.1	54.7	13.8	54.3
2010-11	24.8	54.3	14.7	54.6
2011-12	25.3	55.3	15.5	56.3

Source: Census, Government of India, 2011

The Table indicates that in India women participation is higher in rural area as compared to the urban area. In first decade of the 21st century the trend is more or less stable. Any clear increase in women's participation in labour force is not witnessed both in urban as well as rural areas. Higher participation in rural areas is also a matter of distress as most of these women seem to be engaged as landless agricultural labour.

A similar trend is shown in table – 2 where workforce participation rate is given by gender and by sector based on the samples, using usual status approach which includes principal and subsidiary status workers of all ages. The table shows that in 2015-16 the workforce participation rate of women has gone further down in both urban and rural areas.

Table-2: Workforce Participation Rate by Gender and by Sector

Year	Rural		Urban	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
2000-01	28.7	54.4	14.0	53.1
2007-08	28.9	54.8	13.8	55.4
2011-12	30.0	53.0	15.4	53.8
2015-16	24.8	54.3	14.7	54.6

Note: Usual status approach includes principal and subsidiary status of all ages. Based on the samples

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India

Table-3 shows percentage distribution of workers according to broad employment status in 2011-12. In urban area for all the three categories, number of men and women is almost equal except in case of Regular Salaried/Wage employed in rural areas. In this category women are roughly half the

men employed though the number is slightly less in case of urban areas. However, number of women is more in self-employed category in both the rural and urban areas. This employment of women must be mainly in household type of industries.

Table-3: Percentage Distribution of Workers According to Broad Employment Status-2011-12

Category	Rural		Urban	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Self Employed	59.3	54.4	42.8	41.7
Regular Salaried/ Wage employed	5.6	10.0	42.8	43.4
Casual Labour	35.1	35.5	14.3	14.9

Source: Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India

Further, if we examine Table-4, we find that in urban areas women's employment in both the public and the private sectors has slowly increased during 1990 to 2012. However, participation of women in private sector is higher as compared to that in the public sector. This increase, though slow, in educated employment for women can mainly be attributed to

the growth of Information Technology sector. Information Technology not only increased jobs but it accommodated more women. Though growth in this sector cannot be called inclusive as it could give employment to only educated English speaking women of caste and class in urban areas, but it certainly opened wide opportunities for them.

Table-4: Share of Women Employment out of Total Employment in Organised Sector in India (%)

Year	Public	Private	Total
1990	13.90	26.46	13.80
1995	13.40	20.20	15.40
2000	14.80	23.90	17.60
2005	16.20	24.80	19.00
2009	17.40	24.20	19.90
2010	--	--	20.40
2011	--	--	20.50
2012			20.50

Source: Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India

5. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA

It is a common experience that when in the initial stages of development mechanisation takes place in agricultural sector, women are displaced. When technology advancement takes place in industrial sector, more opportunities go to men. Information Technology has been the first industry where women have been accommodated more and more with improvement of mechanisation and growth of the industry. This industry is expected to directly and indirectly employ 30 million people by 2020.

Table-5 shows direct and indirect employment in IT sector. We can see that though the employment is increasing

but growth percent is continuously falling. We shall take it as an indication that IT sector's potential of generating employment is gradually reaching towards saturation. However, generation of indirect employment by this sector during the same period has been much more than the generation of direct employment. The industry is likely to generate total employment of 30 million by 2020. It may be achieved also as we see that indirect employment has jumped in 2016-17 by two million after a complete stagnation in previous three years. However, the proportion of indirect employment to total employment generated in this sector is increasing.

Table-5: Total Direct and Indirect Employment in IT Sector (No. in millions)

Year	No of Employees (Direct)	Growth %	No of Employees (Indirect)	Growth %
2012-13	3.00	6.67	9.50	6.74
2013-14	3.29	9.67	10.00	5.26
2014-15	3.49	6.59	10.00	0.00
2015-16	3.69	5.82	10.00	0.00
2016-17	3.86	4.75	12.00	20.00
2017-18	3.97	2.71	NA	NA

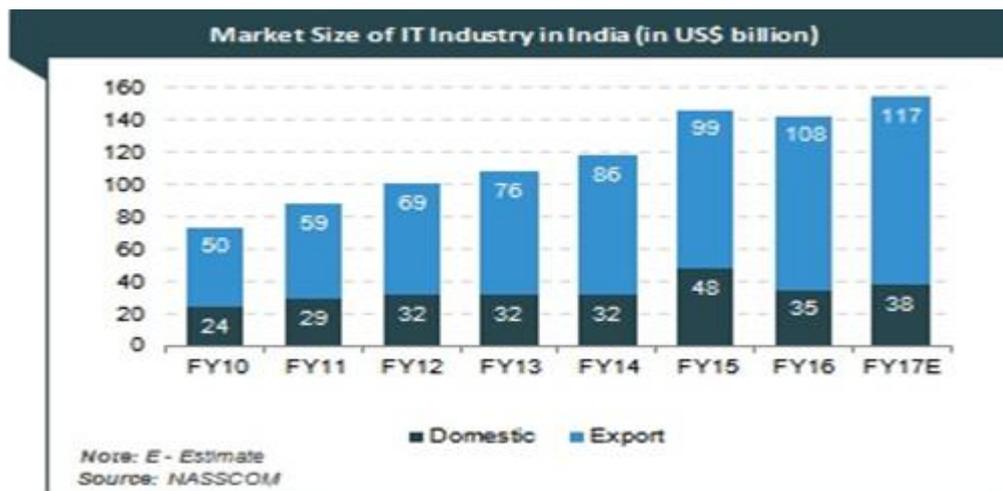
Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question no. 656 on 19.07.17 and 2489 on 21.03.18 and Statista 2018.

As per the Media Reports, Press Information Bureau (PIB), Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) statistics, Department of Information and Technology, Union Budget 2017-18, the global IT & ITeS market (excluding hardware) has reached US\$ 1.2 trillion in 2016-17. The global sourcing market increased by 1.7 times to reach US\$ 1.73-1.78 trillion in the same year. Growing at 7.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) (7.7% in 2016) this industry in India is likely to reach US\$ 2.50 trillion by 2020. India remained the world's top sourcing destination in 2016-17 with a share of 55 per cent. Indian IT & ITeS companies have set up over 1,000 global delivery centers in over 200 cities around the world. The main reason behind this phenomenal growth is India's cost competitiveness in providing IT services. India is approximately 3-4 times cheaper than the US in the global sourcing market.

The planners' efforts undertaken to develop the information technology sector in India have yielded good results in terms of export earnings and have established the country's credibility in international markets. India is also gaining importance for its intellectual capital as several global IT firms have set up their innovation centers in India. India has the highest proportion of digital talent in the country at 76 per cent whereas; the global average is 56 per cent.

Indian IT's core competencies and strengths have attracted significant investments from major countries. The computer software and hardware sector in India attracted cumulative Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows US\$ 29.825 billion from April 2000 to December 2017, according to data released by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP). Market size of IT industry in India from 2010 to 2017 as per NASSCOM is given in graph 1.

Graph-1



The graph indicates that size of the industry both domestic and export has continuously increased from 2010 to 2017 except for 2016 when though domestic market had increased but exports had come down substantially. However, in 2017 again the exports have started showing the increasing trends.

On the basis of the above analysis the main role of IT sector seems to generate foreign exchange for the country rather than focusing on providing linkages for overall economic development to the whole economy. If we make a reasonable assumption that access to computers (and to computer-based electronic communications) is empowering, then 80 per cent of the Indian people who do not have access to computers and who do not have good enough English education for computer use will not be considered as empowered. The exclusion of majority of Indian population from the 'information age' raises questions about politics, culture and software that are important not only to India, but to the entire world.

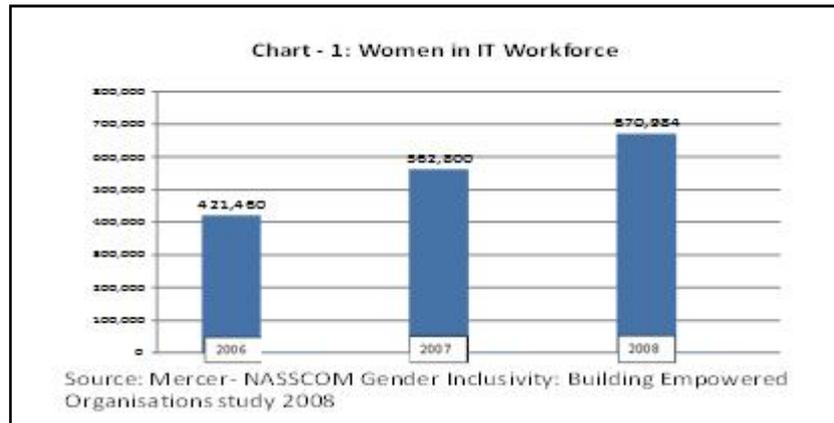
Number of working women in India is highest in the world. Out of total working population of approximately 400 million, 20 to 25 per cent are women. Out of these women, a large number is working in unorganized rural areas. Only 15 per cent work in urban India, a very small fraction of which works in the organized sector. Whatever is the number of educated, English speaking working women in urban India is largely due to the growth of the IT-BPO industry, which is one of the largest recruiters of a qualified workforce in recent times. This study aims at finding out how inclusive has been India's IT/BPO sector, with respect to women.

The need of providing equal opportunities to women in IT sector was felt first of all in North America in nineties. As most of India's leading IT-BPO companies were closely working with large global companies, they also became part of implementation of their gender inclusivity policies. This is why IT-BPO companies have been among the first to realize the impact of gender inclusivity on business success. Though

the gender gap not only in employment but in wages too plagues the world of business all over the world but NASSCOM says that IT sector is not only recruiting more women but is giving them leadership roles also. As per its estimates nearly 60 % of Indian IT firms have 20% women at the C suite level. This is mainly due to gender-inclusive HR policies like flexi work hours, work from home, social security benefits, anti harassment policy and much more. Sangeeta Gupta, Senior Vice President, Nasscom, said in a statement, "It has become conventional wisdom that firms that priorities gender parity outperform others. It is our collective responsibility to develop women's career to executive roles for the better of the industry at large."

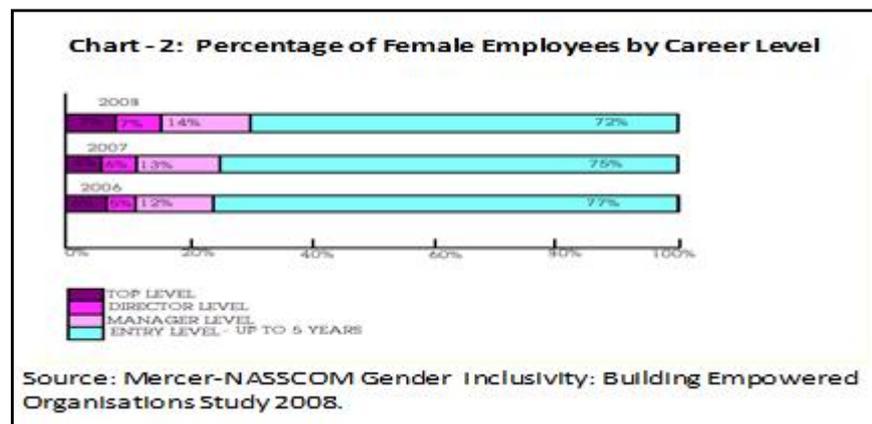
IT industry in India seems to be closing the gender gap by taking good care of women which is a welcome trend and gives a ray of hope for brighter future. We have seen in tables-1 and 2 above that women's participation in labour force in urban areas is around 15%. Separately this data for IT sector is not available but most of the IT companies claim in their Annual Reports that they are employing more than 30% women employees. For example, TCS has more than 139,000 permanent women employees which represent 35.3% of its total permanent work. Infosys, as per its official website, had close to 74,000 women associates, as per their annual report 2017-18 which form close to 36% of their 204,000 strong workforce. Tech Mahindra's employee strength in India stood in excess of 113,550 with women forming close to 33% of workforce.

It is a general understanding that women, who throughout the history of technological development in Agriculture as well as in the industrial sector, have been displaced from their traditional work, are now gaining advantage from the growth of the Information Technology Industry. One welcome change is witnessed in the Indian IT sector that it provides favourable work conditions to the women. Chart - 1 gives an account of number of women employed in IT sector which has been increasing over the years.



Still, the fact remains that the advantage of working in IT sector is available only to English speaking young urban women and it is also alleged that women are employed only in low paid jobs in this industry. This is true also to some extent as we can see in Chart - 2 that more than 70 per cent women are employed at entry level jobs. The point of satisfaction is that the number of women at top levels, director

level and manager level, is increasing over the years. This has solved the problem of inclusion of urban educated women in the process of development in India to some extent as compared to the other disadvantaged groups who could not be included in the growth process even by the high achiever Information Technology sector.



The disadvantages of odd working hours, exploitation, insecurity, lower salary, displacement from service when pregnant, discrimination in promotion etc. are the other problems which women in Indian IT sector face and that is explored in the primary survey.

6. ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY DATA

The whole analysis is divided into the sections of socio-economic profile of the respondents, the problems faced by them and the suggestions given by them to make the working environment more gender inclusive.

i. Socio-economic Profile

Out of 200 women working in IT sector contacted for collection of data, 80% were in the age group of 21-30. 9% women were even below the age of 21. Only 11% women were above the age of 30 years out of which only two women were above the age of 40 years. This shows preference of the employers for giving jobs to younger women.

68% women were unmarried which shows that women with family responsibilities are less inclined to take up employment in IT sector as the pressure of work seems to be high due to time bound projects. This suits to the employers also.

The sample working women were highly educated. They possessed degrees like B.Tech/BE/MCA, MTech/ME, BSC IT, CA, MBA, Ph.D., Master in Finance etc. though 70 respondents had non-technical degrees. The organisations where they were working are, IRIS Business Services Ltd, Idea, Jabong, Lawruce Infotech, Computime Consultancy Ltd., Global Info Services, ACC, Flipkart, Big suns Technology, Global Info Solutions, Modelert Builders Ltd and Vodafone.

Out of 200 respondents 57 (28.5%) had less than one year of experience in their job. 62 (31%) had 1-3 years of experience and 57 (28.5%) had 3-6 years of experience. Only 24 (12%) women had experience of more than 6 years. Thus more than 60% of the total respondents were having experience of less than three years. Designation-wise their number is given in following table. The table shows that more than 75% of the respondents were working as team members or trainees.

Particulars	No of respondents	Percentage
Trainee	46	23.0
Team Member	107	53.5
Team Leader	29	14.5
Project Leader	9	4.5
Senior Project Manager	9	4.5
Director or above	Zero	-
Total	200	100.0

ii. Family Support

Data reveal that out of total 200 women respondents 74 (37%) women who responded to the question of family support, 54 unmarried women said that the family has given them full freedom to pursue their career and do not have any expectations for carrying out domestic responsibilities. Whereas these numbers for married women, including one divorced, were only 20. The data show that about 40% (54 out of 136 total) unmarried and 33% (20 out of 62) married women get full support of the family in pursuing their career. These results are not very encouraging.

85 women (42.5%) who responded that family has given them freedom to pursue their career and helps them to carry out domestic responsibilities, 59 were unmarried while only 26 were married. These women are not completely free from the family responsibilities but get help from the family members in carrying out the same. The number of married women getting family support is less than that of unmarried women.

11 women (5 married, 5 unmarried and 1 divorced) replied that family expects them to compromise at work place for carrying out domestic responsibilities. Even worse was the response of 16 women who say that families wants them to work because they earn but show nagging behavior when it comes to fulfilling family responsibilities. 6 women were working against the will of their family members as the families want their working women members to quit the work for carrying out domestic responsibilities.

We have got the encouraging trends in analysis of the question related to reasons of working. Out of 200 respondents, 180 have reported that they are working for Career Aspiration or for Own Identity or any other reason. Only 23 women were working due to Financial Compulsions. 10 women were even found working because of family pressure.

When these women were asked about why did they select the IT sector most (33%) of them selected the option of better growth prospects. Other preferred options were good work culture (13%), better remuneration (12%), good office ambience (11%), or work is suitable for women (9%). Most of these women were even trained in the same field and had decided to join this industry from their students' days itself.

iii. Office Support

Most of the respondents (89%) found their senior office staff members encouraging and understanding or helping. 22% found them neutral. Only 9% women reported negative attitude from their seniors like - being discouraging and fault finding or making work more or even making fun of them. Subordinates were also mostly found helping (46%), obedient (18.5%), courteous (18%). 17.5% women found their subordinates neutral. Only 6.5% women found that their subordinates resent working under a woman boss. 2% women thought that subordinates do not listen and only 1% found subordinates making fun. In general respondents found the office

environment very considerate (20%), good (50%) and ok (19%). Only one person found the office environment bad.

When the respondents were asked about the working hours 37 % women found that suitable. 43.5% women responded that even flexi hours are possible. 18.5 % felt the working hours are not different from any other office. Only 10.5% felt that working hours are not suitable for women.

iv. Gender Inclusion

When the respondents were asked whether IT sector has provided good earning opportunity for Women, 84% responses were affirmative. For most of the respondents (26.8%) reason for saying yes to the question was better growth prospects in the industry. The second most important reason found by 23.8% respondents was flexible and accommodating nature of the industry. About 15% women found the industry good for women. Other reasons reported by the respondents were equal treatment (12.5%), booming industry (9%), better salary (8.3%) and 4.8% thought that the working environment in the industry is good.

The sample respondents were asked about their understanding of gender inclusion. Most of the women (47.5%) considered equal opportunities to men and women as gender inclusion. 39% respondents felt there should be no gender bias. Other responses were active participation of women in all fields (5.5%), freedom to work as men (3%) and women should not feel left out (2.5%). Women also responded to whether working environment is gender inclusive in their office. 75% felt that the environment is gender inclusive but 22% did not feel so. Six women did not respond to this question.

Women also responded about why they felt that their office is gender inclusive. They found it so because large numbers of women are employed in the company (26%), anti-sexual harassment norms are in place in this company (27%), all the applicable social security benefits are provided to men and women on par (29%) women are generally employed on permanent basis and not on contractual basis (17%), there are provisions for maternity/paternity leave or long break for child education without loss of any benefit of continuity in service and it properly implemented also (37%), flexi leave policy (19.5%) and transportation policy (19%).

After getting such positive response about gender inclusive environment the question was asked whether women working in their organization are able to utilize their full potential. 83% of the respondents gave affirmative answer.

About gender discrimination it was found that maximum discrimination takes place in shift allotment and work distribution. Other important ways to discriminate are found in assignment of lucrative assignments and promotions. Besides, in training opportunity, monetary and other benefits, foreign tours and in salary also discrimination was observed.

Women generally faced problem of frequent working beyond the working hours and odd working hours in IT industry. Some women also reported various types of

discrimination, lack of social security measures; contractual nature of work, glass ceiling, no personal security and frequent touring within and outside the country as general problems faced by them.

7.CONCLUSION

Overall increase in participation of women in workforce will require addressing multiple and reinforcing barriers to equality among families, job and product markets:

- ❖ First step would be to improve the access for girls to education.
- ❖ Second step would be to address market and institutional failures that lock women into low return and highly vulnerable forms of employment.
- ❖ Third step will be to address the violence against women and girls.
- ❖ Fourth step will be to address structural weaknesses in police and judicial systems which deny women access to justice and render laws ineffective.

When we consider that percentage of these educated women, both married or unmarried, from the educated, career oriented families staying in the most modern Indian city of Mumbai, we can say that women's work still gets the secondary status when it comes to bear the family responsibilities. This clearly indicates that working women even in urban educated class are facing the double burden as the society does not seem to value their contribution besides the money that they earn.

However, the office support was found reasonably good and gender inclusive. Very few women found problems in working environment due to family responsibilities, glass ceiling, less opportunities to perform higher roles, voluntary attrition of working women due to marriage, children or relocation etc. Discrimination was sometimes reported in shift allotment and work distribution, assignment of lucrative assignments and promotions, training opportunity, monetary and other benefits, foreign tours and sometimes in salary.

When the respondents were asked to give suggestions for improving the situation, 13 women said the industry is great as it is, 86 did not respond and 7 did not know what to say. However, 58 women suggested that equality of gender and age should be there at work place. Gender sensitization for better behavior of men in helping to juniors and flexi hours were suggested by some.

Overall it can be said that IT industry has given justice to urban educated women and has been far more gender inclusive than any other sector of the economy. It has certainly given quality employment to women in large numbers. Of late, there have been less complaints of gender discrimination and women seem to have been breaking the glass ceiling also. Women who are still facing problems in this sector are mainly due to patriarchal mindset of people at home and in the society rather than at workplace.

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